

Message Text

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION TO SECSTATE INFO WELLINGTON MELBOURNE
SYDNEY CINCPAC MAY 19, 1974 FROM CANBERRA REPEATED TO YOU:

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SUBJECT: INCOMPLETE RETURNS IN AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS INDICATE
LABOR GOVERNMENT RE-ELECTED WITH REDUCED MAJORITY

REF: CANBERRA 2945

SUMMARY: INCOMPLETE RETURNS IN AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS OF MAY 18
INDICATE LABOR GOVERNMENT WAS RE-ELECTED WITH MAJORITY REDUCED OVER
EFFECTIVE EIGHT SEAT MARGIN IN OUTGOING HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE.
APPEARS UNLIKELY LABOR WILL CONTROL SENATE, THOUGH RETURNS
STILL FRAGMENTARY. FOUR REFERENDUM PROPOSALS DID WELL IN NEW SOUTH
WALES AND VICTORIA BUT HAVE DONE LESS WELL IN OTHER STATES,
VIRTUALLY ENSURING THEIR DEFEAT. END SUMMARY.

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1. COUNTING RESULTS OF AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS OF MAY 18 SUSPENDED

EARLY MORNING MAY 19 (CANBERRA TIME) AND NOT RESUMED UNTIL AFTERNOON MAY 19. RESULTS AVAILABLE ARE STILL FRAGMENTARY, BUT MOST COMMENTATORS PREDICT LABOR GOVERNMENT WILL RETURN WITH REDUCED MAJORITY AS COMPARED WITH EFFECTIVE EIGHT SEAT MARGIN IN OUTGOING HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT LABOR WILL CONTROL SENATE, THOUGH RETURNS ARE STILL FRAGMENTARY, AND FINAL RESULTS ARE DETERMINED BY USE OF QTE EXHAUSTIVE PREFERENCE END QTE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM. CHIEF AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL OFFICER F.L. LEY TOLD PRESS AFTERNOON OF MAY 19 THAT FINAL SENATE RESULTS MAY NOT RPT NOT BE KNOWN FOR ONE MONTH, WHILE HOUSE RESULTS (WHICH DETERMINE COMPOSITION OF GOVERNMENT) MAY NOT BE FULLY KNOWN FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS. FOUR REFERENDUM PROPOSALS ALSO VOTED ON MAY 18 ARE EVIDENTLY HEADED FOR DEFEAT, AS HAVE MOST REFERENDUM PROPOSALS IN PAST. PROPOSALS HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA BUT ARE WELL BEHIND ELSEWHERE, THOUGH COUNTING IS PROCEEDING SLOWLY.

2. VOTE COUNTING EVENING OF MAY 18 WAS ACCOMPANIED BY WIDE SWINGS IN OPTIMISM AND PESSIMISM AMONG GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS. TILL MIDNIGHT MAY 18 COMPUTER PROJECTIONS OF PARTIAL RETURNS HAD SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE UP TO 17 SEAT MAJORITY IN HOUSE, THOUGH SENATE RETURNS WERE SLOW AND COMPUTER PROJECTIONS DELAYED THROUGH BREAKDOWN IN COMPUTER. HOWEVER, LATER RETURNS REVERSED DIRECTION OF ABOUT A DOZEN SEATS, WITH ADVANTAGE TO LIBERAL-COUNTRY OPPOSITION. OPPOSITION LEADER SNEDDEN ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO GIVE PRESS CONFERENCE AFTERNOON OF MAY 19 BUT CANCELLED IT WHEN VOTE COUNT BEGAN TO TURN TO ADVANTAGE OF OPPOSITION. PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAS MADE NO STATEMENT ON OUTCOME. ALP PRESIDENT HAWKE, AFTER EUPHORIC CLAIM OF VICTORY EVENING MAY 18, COMMENTED TO PRESS MORNING OF MAY 19 THATSITUATION SO TIGHT THAT GOVERNMENT DEFEAT COULD NOT BE EXCLUDED. (WE DO NOT BELIEVE THERE IS ANY CHANCE OPPOSITION WILL CONTROL HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNMENT) MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION GRASSBY, WHO WON EASILY IN RURAL SEAT IN NEW SOUTH WALES IN 1972, IS TRAILING AND IS IN DANGER OF DEFEAT. ON OTHER HAND, LIBERAL WHIP FOX, WHO WON MELBOURNE METROPOLITAN SEAT IN 1972 BY NARROW MARGIN, HAS PROBABLY BEEN DEFEATED BY ALP MRS. JOAN CHILD WHO, IF IN FACT ELECTED, WILL BE FIRST WOMAN IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SINCE 1969.

3. LIBERAL-COUNTRY OPPOSITION HAS PROBABLY PICKED UP TWO SEATS
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IN QUEENSLAND (WHERE ALP DID POORLY, OVERALL) AND ONE SEAT IN NEW SOUTH WALES, WHILE IT MAY ALSO GAIN FOUR OTHER SEATS IN NEW SOUTH WALES, THOUGH MARGIN IS CLOSE. ALP HAS PICKED THE TWO NEW SEATS IN AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY AND IN PERTH AREA, AS WELL AS TWO SEATS IN VICTORIA. LIBERAL SEATS IN NEW SOUTH WALES, VICTORIA AND QUEENSLAND WHICH LABOR HAD GOOD CHANCE OF TAKING HAVE EVIDENTLY BEEN RETAINED BY OPPOSITION.

4. IN CASE OF CLOSE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ELECTIONS, LAW REQUIRES THAT ELECTION AUTHORITIES WAIT 10 DAYS FOR POSTAL VOTES TO COME IN (OFTEN NUMBERING SEVERAL HUNDRED) BEFORE PROCEEDING TO FINAL COUNT AND DISTRIBUTION OF PREFERENCES. THIS PROCESS IS LIKELY TO INVOLVE CONSIDERABLE DELAY IN DETERMINATION OF FINAL OUTCOME.

5. THIS HAS LARGELY BEEN A FEATURELESS ELECTION IN TERMS OF GENERAL TRENDS. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STATES AND WITHIN STATES HAVE BEEN MARKED, AND ELECTIONS WILL BE FRUITFUL SUBJECT FOR PH.D. DISSERTATIONS FOR YEARS TO COME.
GREEN UNQUOTE RUSH

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